



Criminal Legal Reform in the 2026 Maryland Legislative Session: *Advocates' Retreat*

Friday, October 3rd
9 am to 3:30 pm

Hosted at the
University of Baltimore, School of Law



Criminal Legal Reform in the 2026 Maryland Legislative Session: Advocates' Retreat

Purpose: We are coming together to:

- Hear about the dominant narratives including changes in the national landscape shaping policymakers' and public perception, and areas of potential rollbacks to existing reforms to inform a coordinated and cohesive approach.
- Learn about current criminal legal reform campaigns happening in Maryland to build upon the wins and challenges of last year as we look to the 2026 Legislative Session.
- Deepen our coordination and collaboration as policy advocates, service providers, and community leaders, led by and continually informed by directly impacted voices.

Outcomes: Through our time together today, we hope to:

- Build community, deepen connections, and strengthen solidarity among advocates, service providers, and community leaders.
- Share information and increase awareness of criminal legal reform campaigns in Maryland and defensive strategies to protect existing progress that, in turn, helps attendees identify opportunities to walk together through the headwinds and challenges of this time.
- Foster a stronger sense of community to carry us into the 2026 legislative session.

Process: Here is how we will spend our time:

Criminal Legal Reform in the 2026 Maryland Legislative Session: Retreat Agenda

8:45 - 9:30 (45m)	Breakfast and Check-in	
9:30 - 9:50 (20m)	Welcome and Opening Remarks Opening remarks will provide background and insights on the significance of this third annual retreat, covering: • Purpose: why we're coming together today; • Outcome: what we hope to accomplish through our time together;	Heather Warnken, Executive Director, Center for Criminal Justice Reform, UBalt Law Trina Selden, Founder and Executive Director, Out for Justice

	● Process: how we will spend our time (agenda and logistics).	Anthony Muhammad, Maryland Parole Partnership, ACLU of Maryland Michele Kennedy-Kouadio, Vice President, A Mother's Cry
9:50 - 10:30 (40 min)	A Conversation About the National Landscape and Anticipated Defense We will hear about the national landscape and climate of criminal justice reform, including known threats of rollbacks, disinvestment in community safety, and anticipated defensive fights.	Speakers: Clinique Chapman, Chief Executive Officer, DC Justice Lab Brian Tashman, Deputy Director, Vera Action
10:30 - 11:45 (75 min)	Panel: National Impacts and a Conversation About the Narrative On Community Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Panelists will explore the full-scale attacks on proven reforms nationwide and how they shift attention and capacity here in Maryland. The conversation will highlight how these shifts impact community safety and the narratives shaping public policy, while surfacing opportunities for collaboration across the state and geographic region. Key questions include: ● What are the dominant narratives? ● What challenges do we need to confront when talking about youth versus adults? ● Who are the key people to reach, and who are the most effective messengers? ● How do narratives differ across Maryland, the region, and nationally—and how do they influence one another? ● When we think about a shared community safety narrative, what elements are most critical?	Moderator: Alice Wilkerson, Executive Director, Advance Maryland Panelists: Lawrence Grandpre, Director of Research, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle Zakiya Sankara-Jabar, Co-Founder & Co-Executive Director, Racial Justice NOW Keith Wallington, Director, Crime Survivor Voices Project, Center for Criminal Justice Reform, UBalt Law Bethany Young, Policy Director, DC Justice Lab

11:45 - 12:30 (45m)	Lunch	Boxed lunches and networking
12:30 - 1:20 (50m)	Shaping the 2026 Legislative Agenda - Part 1 Panelists will share information about top campaign(s) and bill(s) they are working on. This may include utilizing their time to discuss multiple pieces of an organization/ coalition's agenda if it contains more than one policy priority. Given the volume of presenters, this will take place in back to back panels, each with opportunity for Q&A. Key questions include: • What are the issues this bill/campaign is trying to address, and why is this the right solution? • What do you anticipate being the main obstacles or challenges? • What is needed to be successful? • Are there specific opportunities among the advocacy community to increase awareness, collaboration and/or other forms of needed support?	Moderator: Kirsten Gettys Downs, Director of Systemic Reform, Maryland Office of the Public Defender Panelists: Zach Alberts, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Initiatives, Center for Urban Families / Maryland Expungement Coalition Anne Bocchini Pack, Co-Founder and Director of Advocacy, Prepare Judge Phil Caroom, Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform (MAJR)
1:20 - 2:15 (50m)	Shaping the 2026 Legislative Agenda - Part 2 Second group of panelists to participate.	Ryan Ewing, Campaign Strategist, Clean Slate Initiative Devon King, Maryland Second Look Coalition Elizabeth Hilliard, Director of Government Relations, Maryland Office of the Public Defender Dara Johnson, Interim Policy Counsel, ACLU of Maryland

		Treveric Speaks, Leadership Development Organizer, Out for Justice Natasha White, Director of Community Engagement, Interfaith Action for Human Rights
2:15 - 2:30 (15m)	Stretch Break	
2:30 - 3:15 (45m)	The Broader Criminal Justice Reform Agenda: Open Mic Time Guided by facilitators, attendees will have the opportunity to engage in informal but structured dialogue about the day's agenda thus far, to share additional updates/ aspects of the criminal legal reform landscape that have not been addressed earlier in the day. This may include, for example, budding campaigns that may still be in early stages of formation, implementation challenges, and bills not yet covered.	Moderator: Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Executive Director, The Sayra and Neil Meyerhoff Center for Families, Children and the Courts, UBalt Law Rashad Hawkins, Community Fellow, Gibson-Banks Center for Race and the Law, University of Maryland School of Law
3:15 - 3:30 (15m)	Reflections and What's Next Attendees will share closing thoughts and takeaways from the retreat dialogue. Organizers will highlight resources we hope attendees are taking from our time together, including mechanisms for working together and remaining in touch.	Moderator: Michael Tines, Legal Fellow, Center for Criminal Justice Reform, UBalt Law
3:30 - 4:30 (60m)	After Hours Social Optional reception to increase opportunity for relationship building, networking, and organic dialogue across the advocacy community.	

Guest Wi-Fi Information:

Guest Username: ubevent2

Guest Password: 29097516